

## MEGALITHISM AND IDENTITY DIALOGUES: TEXTS, CONTEXTS AND PRETEXTS

### *MEGALITISMO E DISCURSOS IDENTITÁRIOS: TEXTOS, CONTEXTOS E PRETEXTOS*

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«Os megálitos são sem dúvida os mais comuns e ao mesmo tempo os mais impressionantes monumentos pré-históricos da Europa»  
(Arnaud, 1977)

#### ABSTRACT

Since at least the medieval time that the megalithic structures have aroused curiosity and pretexted various theories around its construction and functionality. With the beginning of the formative process of the 'nation-states', they became particularly interesting in visually marking the territory and referring to a certain pre-Roman ancestry. A preterit that was reinforced already in the 19th century, in reaction to the Napoleonic political project that legitimized subsequent national and regional identity affirmations.

Portugal was no exception, not so much for the political assertion as for the need felt by the pioneers of archaeology in the country to fit into the 'state of the art' of European research regarding prehistoric archaeology. From then on, this theme no longer went beyond its horizons, but rather strengthened according to the prevalence of personal (rather than institutional) agendas. We will therefore proceed to a very brief analysis of some of the contexts that in Portugal have pretexted the production of texts on megalithic structures, from the end of the 19th century to the 3rd Archaeological Conference of the Association of Portuguese Archaeologists (1977).

KEY WORDS: History of Archeology; Megalithism; Portugal

#### RESUMO

*Desde, pelo menos, os tempos medievos que as estruturas megalíticas suscitaram curiosidade e pretextaram diversas teorias em torno da sua construção e funcionalidade. Com o início do processo formativo dos Estados-nação, elas tornaram-se particularmente interessantes ao marcarem visualmente o ter-*

*ritório e remeterem para uma determinada ancestralidade pré-romana. Um pretérito que foi reforçado já no século 19, em reacção ao projecto político napoleónico que legitimou subsequentes afirmações identitárias de âmbito nacional e regional.*

*Portugal não foi excepção, não tanto pela asserção política, quanto pela necessidade sentida pelos pioneiros da arqueologia no país de se enquadrarem no ‘estado da arte’ da investigação europeia em matéria de arqueologia pré-histórica. De então em diante, esta temática não mais saiu dos seus horizontes, antes fortalecendo de acordo com a prevalência de agendas pessoais (mais do que institucionais).*

*Procederemos, por conseguinte, a uma brevíssima análise de alguns dos contextos que, em Portugal, pretextaram a produção de textos sobre o megalitismo, desde finais de Oitocentos até às III Jornadas Arqueológicas da Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses (1977).*

*PALAVRAS-CHAVE: História da Arqueologia; Megalitismo; Portugal.*

## **1. GENERAL CONTEXTS AND PRETEXTS**

As far as we know, it was especially during medieval times that megaliths motivated several and contradictory feelings among European people. The reasons were certainly various, but their usual mega dimension was certainly central, together with the lack of knowledge regarding its meaning and purpose. And the continuous questioning about their use signified that there were no written sources or even oral traditions which could help deciphering this kind of enigma. And this meant that no one knew who their builders and users were simply because they belonged to very old times from which there was no intellectual clue. And the absence of knowledge, in first place, and of clues, in second, opened a Pandora’s box to most fascinating theories.

Unsurprisingly, common people dealt with their presence very easily and somehow comfortably. They have stood there ever since in the middle of nowhere, useful in rainy and stormy days in protecting shepherds during their transhumance paths. Moreover, they served as unofficial landmarks extremely important for several reasons, one of them being the need of people to belong to a place, a territory, a geography, to an identity however restricted it could be. Additionally, deprived of their original meaning, some of them were totally or partially reused accordingly to circumstantial needs.

But this was, let’s say, the practical side of the megaliths, as there was another one: the mystery they carried on in consequence of the ignorance about their origins. But one thing was for sure: they were built by giants or even clever dwarfs. More than that, they could simply be the result of some telluric

phenomenon. It could not be otherwise. If not, how were they built them, especially dolmens? And how to explain the fact that in most cases their raw material was carried from far regions? Yes, their builders should be giants; giants that no longer existed.

In the meanwhile, the increasing presence and prevalence of Christianity in the country ended with some – then already seen as pagan –, periodical festivities always linked to the agriculture cycles, or – more wisely –, incorporated them into new religious practices. Gradually, some megaliths were transformed in chapels; others in shelters of witches and therefore abandoned and untouched, until the forests covered them totally and were forgotten for centuries. But other megaliths continued to be used accordingly ancient practices, far from the church control. Mainly by women; unmarried and unchilded women who expected to be touched by the strength of an ancient mystery strongly embodied of magic; a magic condemned by the Church with fire. And this condemn began to frighten common people and to keep them away from those bizarre, abnormal structures. It was another way of controlling minds and social practices.

But this apparent fear / fascination – two very close feelings –, had a positive effect: the megaliths were preserved in most of the cases and some of the unintelligible (for those times) artefacts discovered inside and / or around them were included in the social prestigious and private ‘cabinet of curiosities’. At least until the 18th century, when a new entourage, political, economic, social and cultural justified the multiplication of academies, libraries, hortus, zoological gardens, laboratories, collections, etc., together with the publication of monographs and scientific journal.

It was the ante camera of the Illuminated Era. And it was precisely with the advent of this intellectual movement that some researchers began to link the Celts to the megaliths, which lead to the recognition of a pre-Gaul period mostly known through the Julius Cesar’s descriptions which interpreted the megaliths as altars of human sacrifices. An idea which survived all over a significant part of the 19th century. But the most important thing here was that they began to be analysed as resulting from human action. More than that, they were assumed as endogenous structures built by the hands of the Gaul’s, eagerly accepted by academicians as direct ancestors of the French. It was then time to search for their primeval roots as the origin – somehow – of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Liberalism. Predictably, Napoleon I financed the ‘Académie Celtique’ (‘Celtic Academy’) (1804) and, in 1858, it was founded the ‘Commission de Topographie des Gaules’ (Commission for the Topography of the Gauls’), which members studied the French geography, history and archaeology previously to

the Carolingian Empire.

Portugal also had its kind of ante-chamber of the Enlightenment when one of the officious Maecenas of catholic Rome, King João V (1689-1750) founded the Royal Academy of History (RAH) (1720) followed, one year later, by the decree obliging everyone who found ancient artefacts during their agricultural activities to notify the regional governors who, in return, should send them to Lisbon to be analysed, studied and divulged by the academicians in conferences and papers published in the RAH' annals. And the interesting thing is that due to this decree there were identified more than 300 megalithic structures in the country, not knowing their prehistorical origin, as it would be necessary to wait for more than a century to classify them as so.

Unfortunately, the earthquake of 1755, which affected tremendously Lisbon and had serious impacts in other Portuguese and even Spanish locals and regions, obliged politicians to left aside most of the previously established culture issues. There was simply no time and no room for them. The priority was to bury the death bodies and to take care of the livings, whilst the new prime minister, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo (1699-1782), future Marquis of Pombal, mason, projected a new capital based on the prevailing French rationalistic principles, rebuilding the historical centre with orthogonal streets situated between its two main squares, one of which opened to the river-sea welcoming the outlanders. Of course, he was attentive to the heritage situation. He simply could not ignore totally the decree 1721 (see above), but there were other priorities. Even so, he asked for instance Lisbon priests to list every historical building situated in each parish, to have a better notion of the damages and to save them from future hazards. An aim expanded by Queen Maria I (1734-1816) in creating the Royal Academy of Sciences (1779) to which were transferred some projects took on by the RAH shut down after the earthquake. But, what about megaliths during Neoclassicism, following the rediscovery of such ancient cities as Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabia? Who cared about megalithic structures when the elites, the intellectuals of the western world were amazed and delighted with the very few news coming from the excavations financed nearby Naples by the future Spanish King Carlos III (1816-1888), before they could read about them in rare illustrated albums of big dimension or even in some examples of voyage literature and in the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's (1717-1768)?

Who could be really interested in this archaic architecture when the recently available private collections of Carlos III brought together the splendour of roman times exhumed directly from some of its primary sources and, what was more important, unveiling the colourful of their everyday life's? What

could be better than to collect artefacts from these and other classical places obtained through a growing illicit market of antiquities? Antiquities which became a source of social prestige, not so for nobles, as for the bourgeoisie, even if nobles, including princes and kings, made use of collections, museums, academies, laboratories, etc., as an invigorating way of competing ideologically and politically with each other, mainly in the context of the making of the 'Nation-states' which urged for a new iconography.

It was the beginning of neoclassical times which influenced greatly the western aesthetics, the way of thinking and of living, inspiring artists, architects, decorators, writers, and some manufactures and industries, such as furniture, ceramics, jewellery and clothing. Altogether, it became the metaphorical vestibule of the 19<sup>th</sup> century revivals, being the 18<sup>th</sup> century Neoclassicism the inspirational one.

So, which context allowed reviving the interest towards other preterits beyond the classics, which were also much appreciated in Portugal, considering the works of priest Manuel do Cenáculo (1724-1814) and the personal investment of Queen Maria I in the study of the roman ruins of Tróia (Setúbal, Portugal)?

We argue that regardless of dominant neoclassical aesthetics and ornament grammar, a tiny - but significant - number of intellectuals valued other antiquities as they symbolized the uniqueness of their regions and countries, far beyond classical times, especially the roman ones and, more specifically, the ones that could testify its imperial period, i.e., their dominance over local people. In truth, a long path had been already crossed in this direction if we remind the consequences of Reform and Counter-Reform in historical studies, as it was the commencement of 'national antiquities' in counterpoint to the 'classical' ones. So, there was already a basis where to build new projects concerning megaliths. Megaliths or other pre and post-roman structures, as was the case for iron age hill-forts and elements from primeval Christianity. But the world was bigger than that, and the need to expand horizons of knowledge led 18<sup>th</sup> century naturalists and adventurers to other continents in search for the diversity of God's work and information relevant to the new western industries and markets, whilst Napoleon I (1769-1821) was organizing the first truly holistic Expedition to Egypt (1798) giving way to the 'Egyptomania' which would overwhelm every angles of western elites day life.

Of course, there were always local elites curious about megalithic structures for all the mystery which surrounded them, and because they represented the long ancestry of some places and regions. Nonetheless, one political episode established their systematic inventory and study and linked them to national feelings and needs. In fact, the 'Continental Blockade' (1789-1915) imposed

to Great-Britain by Napoleon I had some unpredictable consequences, one of them being cultural and more specifically archaeological in its - yet - antiquarian version. Why? With difficulties in accomplishing the *Grand Tour* during those years, young nobles, gentries and representatives from high bourgeoisie, whose close male relatives were mostly members of such respected societies as the Dilettanti (1734) and the Antiquaries of London (1751), were forced to travel around their own country in search for its natural and cultural distinctiveness. Suddenly, they discovered a territory full of different geographies, physical, cultural and psychological, which should be described before being destroyed, distorted or forgotten by the strength of the locomotive, symbol of the accelerated industrial process started in the Highlands. And these travellers found, draw and wrote about many ancient buildings, including hundreds of megaliths, mostly of them dolmens. A precious work since for different reasons some of these specimens do not exist anymore or were reused in a such way that one hardly can recognize them.

And we must not Forget that this episode went together with the quarrel between 'Ancient and Moderns', leading, for example, to minucious excavations of ancient monuments, whilst there were some efforts to connect the Bible genealogy to the cultural specificity of each country to legitimate and honour each of them (Mintielle, 1972). Partially due to the Celtic revival connected to the megaliths, emerged a certain urgency in demonstrate that these ancient structures existed long before any material evidence of the *ex-orient lux* theory, holding that, together with Egyptians and Chinese, the Celts was one of the oldest people in the World. Besides, they were at the basis of Monotheism, to withdraw the idea about dolmens as places for the pagan, barbarian, practice of human sacrifices (Daniel, 1963, p. 24-42). Even if not officially and unconsciously, this was an attempt to contradict the generally accepted idea regarding the Germanic supremacy – the *Kulturvolker* – and migration (more than diffusion) of new *modus vivendi e faciendi* arriving from the Near East.

A revival to be introduced also in Portugal, at least by the hands of Augusto Filipe Simões (1835-1884), referring to dolmens as culturally belonging to the Celts and to some artefacts discovered inside them as being originally used by druids, being however one of the first ones to sustain the endogenous evolution of the megaliths in the country. The same was affirmed by Joaquim Possidónio Narciso da Silva (1806-1896), namely during the seminars he coordinated in 1872 on history of art and archaeology (A.H./A.A.P., Actas do Conselho Facultativo, n. ° 99, 15/2/1872) at the 'Royal Association of Portuguese Archaeologists', and still by the end of the 80s when described some dolmens from the

‘Beira interior’ as Celtic tombs of higher priests and chief leaders, disproving hence their assumed use as altar for human sacrifices. Subsequent authors – like Manuel Heleno (1894-1970), the second director of the nowadays National Museum of Archaeology (1893) -, sustained the endogenous phenomenon of megalithism in what Portugal is nowadays, by saying that “maybe we should invert the itinerary to contradict the idea of a megalithic civilization resulting from external influences spread by sea throughout European shores.” (Severo, 1905-1908, p. 7015. Our translation).

But the importance of all these exercises was more than a dilettanti way of live. The typologies repeatedly found in these sketchbooks and memoirs – megaliths and churches (mainly Anglican built in a gothic or neogothic style) – indicated a silent, but vibrant, opposition to the roman imperial period iconographically adopted by Napoleon I as he visual grammar of his political agenda. Predictably, megaliths become, for opponents of napoleon era, a central topic of many paintings, watercolours and drawings intertwined with elements of druidism considered distinctive of the British culture. Thoughts, feelings, ideologies and political needs which went side by side with an increasing romantic scenario expanded by intellectuals such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) in a time when the nostalgia for a non-imperial classical preterit lived together with the necessity to underline medieval and pre-classical predicates of each region and country required by the French Empire. An Empire that unexpectedly also rooted its programme in megalithic times, even if in an anachronic way by linking it to the hero Vercingetorix (82-46 a.C.). But this was a bit latter episode.

It was the past serving as nuclear argument to oppose territorial pretensions. It was the beginning of a systematic use of the ancestors to reaffirm borders, both geographical, ethnical, cultural and / or psychological. In short, it was the implementation of a geo-political strategy based on memories renamed as heritage transformed in national, because presumably unique (as symbols).

## **2. MEGALITHS IN PORTUGAL AND ITS STUDY DURING THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY (a brief glimpse)**

Differently of what happened in such countries like Great-Britain or France, the nonexistence of regional pro-autonomy actions in the Portugal may explain the absence of similar iconographic registers observed beyond our boundaries, where images of antiquarians portrayed next to megalithic monuments were getting usual.

Nevertheless, Portugal could not ignore the amount and diversity of studies published abroad on this theme. That is also why amongst activities undertook



by the 'Comissão Geológica do Reino' ('Geological Commission of the Kingdom') (1857), the most studied megalithic typology - dolmens - was included in the general category of prehistoric monuments thought anachronically understood as Celtic graves. A conclusion certainly resulting from the weak links their leaders still maintained with the most recent European research networks on this subject.

Notwithstanding, their authors tried to understand the emergence and geographical distribution of the identified dolmens ('antas', in Portuguese) by analysing its architectural characteristics, having in mind that "more civilised nations do not stop from the performance of their archaeological researches because they may be thought of as sublime" (Silva, 1888, p. 26. Our translation). Additionally, it was stated that "the different objects discovered during excavations conducted under those monuments, are now attributed to the first Prehistoric migrations, whose period and duration are unknown (Id., 1881, p. 69-71. Our translation). So, there was a strong believe that megaliths were built in what is now Portugal as a result of a migration process to be examined following the work of the French prehistorian Émile Cartailhac (1845-1921), 'Les Âges Préhistoriques d'Espagne et du Portugal' (1886) where their architectural types were connected to associated assemblages as probable clues to understand the occupational evolution in a given region. In relation to this, one of our researchers, V. do M. Gabriel Pereira (1847-1911), stated that,

Évora dolmens [Southeast Portugal] are undoubtedly unique, and their study important to the establishment of the civilisation and relations between primitive people living here, if attention is given to differences observed between them and those from other areas [...] not so much in their construction, but in their position, [in relation to] objects found in the surrounding area (I.A.N./T.T., 1876, Villa, 8.<sup>a</sup>, 1260. Our translation and original underscore)

Because some Portuguese researchers were much interested in this megalithic research "agenda" and since some of them had been already totally or partially destroyed by landowners to reuse their stone elements in different ways, the Board of the 'Real Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses' ('Royal Association of Portuguese Archaeologists') (1863) requested (1874) its members to survey the megaliths eventually standing in their regions and to draw them (Id., 1885, XVI, 8.<sup>a</sup>, 3320), enlarging the geographic spectrum of the previous one focused on Évora and undertook in 1871 by the 'Direcção Geral dos Trabalhos Geológicos' ('General Board of Geologic Works'), probably aiming to obtain something similar to the *Archéologie Nationale* of the French archaeologist, pioneer of the Gaul and Gaul-roman archaeology, founder and first direc-



tor of the *Musée des Antiquités Nationales* (Saint-Germain-en-Laye), Alexandre Louis Joseph Bertrand (1820-1902). Additionally, these maps should become eventually included in a more ambitious project of recording archaeological heritage, “avant que le vandalisme n’ait détruit un plus grand nombre de ces anciennes constructions” (“Discussion”, 1873, p. 726. Our underscore).

### 3. THE “PORTUGUESE” MEGALITHS ABROAD (another brief vision)

Based on the information sent by regional memberships and advised by É. Cartailhac, regarding the method of classification to be adopted for standing stones., the president of the ‘Royal Association’, the architect and archaeologist J. Possidónio N. da Silva (1806-1896), compared, published and presented them in 1879 to the ‘Congrès International d’anthropologie et d’archéologie Préhistorique’ and the ‘Congrès de l’Association Française pour l’Avancement des Sciences’. The result of this was the travel of the Swedish archaeologist Oscar Montelius (1843-1921) to Lisbon to study artefacts exhibited at the ‘Museu Arqueológico do Carmo’ (‘Carmo Archaeological Museum’) (1864). Afterwards he stated that Portuguese archaeological studies were “beaucoup plus avancés qu’en Espagne [et] peut nous donner la solution de bien des questions importantes relatives aux peuples des dolmens” (I.A.N./T.T., 1879, XI, 8.<sup>a</sup>, 1767. Original underscore). ‘Dolmen people’ which he considered as exclusively prehistoric and generating in the North of Europe, whereas, in 1868, the Portuguese writer and historian Inácio de Vilhena Barbosa (1811-1890) published a paper in the journal ‘Archivo Pittresco’ arguing their belonging to Neolithic till Bronze Age. In the meanwhile, other national authors searched for the ethnogenesis of this ‘nomad people’ in the Near East believing in its Semitic origins, hence reinforcing the theory on cultural precedence of South Europe by claiming a direct inheritance from pre-classical civilizations emerged in that region.

Comparing the dolmens existing in Portugal and Spain and based on a linear evolutionist approach, some Portuguese scholars concluded that the first would be older as the stones used in the latter ones “are more regular and the vertical remain in a position closer to the vertical concept” (Mello, 1886, p. 121. Our translation), whilst Possidónio da Silva was persuaded that “les Celtes sont venus dans la péninsule Ibérique par la rive droite de la Guadiana” (Silva, 1881, p. 620. Our underscore). Moreover, “Cette circonstance doit servir beaucoup pour aider à faire les recherches pour trouver la marche que les Celtes auront prise pour entrer dans l’Europe” (“Discussion”, 1873, p. 726. Our underscore). Besides, during a presentation at the ‘Association Française pour l’Avancement des Sciences’ (Montpellier, 1879), he referred that the Celts

gave preference to what was nowadays Portugal, “aux cours de rivières [as] ils ont en suite laissé ces monuments sur leur chemin pour marquer leur passage dans la contrée aux tribus qui les auraient suivis dans leur immigration, pour les indiquer aussi où étaient ensevelis leurs chefs” (Silva, 1879, p. 1).

This meant that he thought megaliths began by being built in Iberia, more specifically in what is now Portugal, and concretely in South Alentejo. A conclusion mostly interesting, since Portugal had no need to emphasize the legitimacy of its political frontiers, as it was one of the oldest European countries to have them established and had no internal movements towards autonomy which could put in danger its unity. Quite the opposite, as shown during the Napoleonic invasions and the presence of the British troops in the first half of the century.

But this was the decade – 70s – of some Iberian union revival supported by many politicians and intellectuals. Fiercely opponent to this purpose, Possidónio da Silva tried to demonstrate, through archaeology, the logics of our national frontiers, unique and cohesive. More than this, and even unconsciously, he considered megaliths as a ‘fossil-director’ of the Celtic presence. Even though, he was aware that much more Portuguese regions should have dolmens in its domains, the reason why he asked for an intensive and extensive geographic survey of the toponym *anta*, the word by which dolmens were widely known in Portugal (Silva, 1881b, p. 620). In addition, some Portuguese authors, like A. Filipe Simões and Possidónio da Silva, believed that some associated materials, like engraved stone plaques which seemed to abound in what was nowadays Portugal, could be specific of this Iberian region, which, in their minds, seemed to endorse the logics of our national frontier, an interpretation supported by 20th century Portuguese archaeologists, like the priest and prehistorian Eugénio Jalhay (1891-1950), for instance. Moreover, they intended to establish a dolmen’s chronology by analysing the shape and contents of those same engrave plaques.

#### **4. PROTECTING MEGALITHS IN PORTUGAL TO KEEP HISTORY ALIVE** (one more brief insight)

Mapping the different megalithic typologies known in Portugal linked to its associated artefacts, and obeying to a specific methodology like the one discussed during the ‘International Congress for Anthropology and Prehistorical Archaeology’ (Budapest, 1878) (Silva, 1879, p. 4), Possidónio da Silva intended to call the attention of politicians towards the importance of their study and the urgency of their protection, and aware provincial scholars of their relevance for local history, though believed that Central Government should be responsible for,

their good preservation, not only to avoid their destruction and loss capital, that they represent; but also, that they may be converted into productive capital for the Country in general, and a true and active element of prosperity for the lands that have them, since everywhere they form a powerful stimulus to the curiosity of travellers (Silva, 1888, p. 7. Our translation and underscore)

In brief, they could contribute to the establishment and development of the most recent western industry: tourism, especially cultural tourism. This could be achieved by creating community museums holding archaeological collections, also to reinforce local and regional feelings essential to sustain heritage safeguard and the inherent common historical memories. Consequently, they could become an important source of national, and regional and local revenue considering that,

If some of these antiquities have escaped constant destruction, continued to the present, it is because the dust and the earth, lifted by storms and dragged by torrential rains, during centuries, have gathered over those precious relics of an extinct greatness, until hiding them entirely for the coveting gaze of destroyers, as implacable as they are ignorant (*Ibidem*. Our translation)

But, stopping their destruction required their classification as “national monuments” (A.H./A.A.P., *Actas da Assembleia Geral*, 132, 7/4/1889; Id., *Idem*, 137, 22/12/1889), which demanded an exhaustive inventory, not only of the building itself, but of all the artefacts and other realities identified inside and on them, simply because these data could differentiate chronologies and cultural belongings, as remembered the archaeologist, art historian, and Professor Vergílio Correia Pinto da Fonseca (1888-1944) when, referring to rock paintings, wrote, in an almost kossinian statement on the hypothetical symbiosis between territory, ethnos and material culture, and interpreting megaliths as a Neolithic phenomenon, that,

The stylised and schematic character of those figures shows that they are Neolithic, like those discovered throughout the neighbouring country, especially in the mountains of the South, betraying the occupation of the Peninsula by a single population in race and culture (Correia, 1922, p. 147. Our translation and underscore)

Independently to these questions, the efforts of Portuguese scholars, many acting in the context of activities developed in connection with the ‘Royal Association of Portuguese Archaeologists’, resulted in the creation of the ‘Comissão

dos Monumentos Nacionais' ('Commission for National Monuments') (1881), after the elaboration of a first list of ancient structures which should deserve such a classification, including dolmens and standing stones. This effort would be crowned in 1910, year of the publication of the first list of classified monuments as "national monuments", including the relation of megaliths. A list little different from that proposed some years earlier, although resulting from successive explorations conducted in the field by the mentor and Director of the 'Museu Etnográfico Português' ('Portuguese Ethnographic Museum) (1893), the archaeologist, ethnographer, and Professor José Leite de Vasconcellos (1858-1941), who manifested always a particular interest by this archaeological typology, whose effective preservation was much complicated by the fact that the monuments were located in private lands.

## 5. SOME FINAL REMARKS

Continuing to call the attention of several scholars, amateurs and common people thanks to their ancestry, diverse typology, abundance, high visibility, unique and almost indecipherable associated artefacts, ample geographical distribution, the awareness of their link to the Neolithic phenomenon and their reuse by several generations, megaliths played and still play a central role in many archaeological projects as they have much to "tell" to all those who embrace them as their scientific program.

It could be almost enough to read the works of our main archaeologists from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to be sure of this, above all about the quarrels established between those, like M. Heleno, who argued about multiple focus of emergency and development of megalithism in our country and its spread from here to French and British shores (Moita, 1956, p. 135-136), and the ones who claimed almost the opposite, as was the case for A. Mendes Correia (1888-1960), from the University of Porto: "the Northwest Iberia [...] [was] the focus from where irradiated a certain megalithic culture" (Correia, 1944, p. 32. Our translation), diffused to the North of Europe as "presumptuous example of and old Atlantic thalassocracy, of a true anonymous western empire, with more than 4 000 years" (*Ibidem*. Our translations and underscores).

This was perhaps one of the attempts of using archaeological artefacts in a presumable scientific narrative to reaffirm individual agendas and / or to sensitize politicians towards the relevance of financing archaeological research, in this case by connecting ancestral realities to the Portuguese overseas mission. A link underlined when Spain related the idea of its own empire to the hypothetical endogenous Tartessian Empire (Wulff Alonso and Martí-Aguilar, 2003, p. 124-133), before Portugal began to feel the international pressure over its Empire.

However, the 1st National Congress of Archaeology (Lisbon, 1958) demonstrated how this subject continued to be central in national studies and was updated amongst national and international archaeologists. From the 84 papers published in two volumes (1959 and 1970), only seven included the words 'megalith' and 'megalithism' in their titles. But this did not mean a disinterest over the them. It only meant that other papers dealt with it from other points of view and that many other scholars began to work on different thematics, from Palaeolithic to museum studies. The same can be observed reading the proceedings from the Archaeological Colloquiums of Oporto (1961-1966), or even the ones from the 1st Archaeological Journeys organized by the Association of Portuguese Archaeologists (1969), where, among 36 papers only two expressed indirectly the analysis of this issue by using the word 'Neolithic' clearly more adequate to the new theoretical demands of the time. Theories and new methods, like thermoluminescence and the C14, which would be detailed analysed by one member of the new generation of archaeologists acting in Portugal after the Revolution, April 1974th, José Morais Arnaud, writing from Cambridge University where, thanks to a scholarship conceded by the State Office of Culture, he was getting a specialization. And, with these last editions, a new chapter was open to the Neolithic and, almost inherently, to the megalithic studies in Portugal.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that there is no currently revival of the megalithic imageries due to some political and social groups acting all around Europe. An issue to be scrutinized very seriously considering their eventual consequences.

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